

Luke 18:9-14 ~ The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector

What Does God Really Want?

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Lambrick Park Church

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Here's the only parable Jesus tells which is set in a place of worship ... all the others are at home, at work, or out in a field somewhere!

Luke 18:⁹ To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable:

¹⁰ “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

¹¹ The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector.

¹² I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

¹³ “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘*God, have mercy on me, a sinner.*’



¹⁴ “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” (NIV)

Heart Formation Question: According to this story, *What is important to God? What does He really want?*

Text Notes:

vv. 11,12 The **Pharisee** checks all the righteousness boxes, both morally and ritually ... in fact he exceeds the requirements of the law (e.g. fasting was required only once a year, not twice a week!) ... but still we don't like him. His self-righteous attitude, which looks down on others, repels us.

vv. 13 By contrast, the **Tax Collector** is a moral wipeout—he doesn't even offer a promise or a plan for how he is going to do better tomorrow.



While the text emphasizes the **WORDS** of the Pharisee, it emphasizes the **POSTURE** of the Tax Collector. The Pharisee is conscious of his **GOODNESS**, while the Tax Collector is aware of his **FALLING SHORT**. The Pharisee puts **HIMSELF** at the center, while the Tax Collector keeps **GOD** at the center. The Pharisee puts his trust in **HIMSELF**, while the Tax Collector trusts in **GOD** Who raises the undeserving from death.

v.14 Shockingly, it's the sinful guy who turns out to be our hero! The moral failure person is the model which Jesus holds up for us to follow!! The Tax Collector goes home justified before God = in right relationship with God = pleasing God = doing what God really wants!

God is:	<u>P</u>resent	<u>A</u>ctive	<u>L</u>oving
We experience Him as:	<u>C</u>ommunicating	<u>C</u>onnecting	<u>C</u>ompassionate
We respond by being:	<u>D</u>ependent	<u>O</u>pen	<u>H</u>umble



Let the Children Come by Liz Lemon Swindle

Luke 18:¹⁷ Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. (NIV)

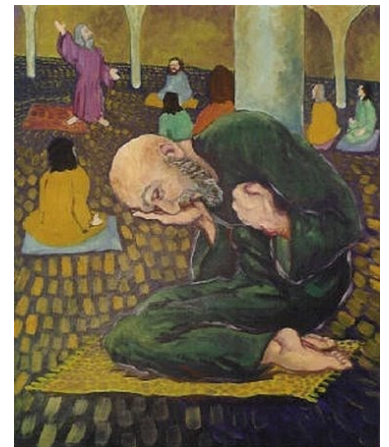
Matt 5:³ You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you, there is more of God and His rule. (MSG)

This invitation to childlike dependence is not humiliating worm theology. We are His beloved children ... made in His Image, filled with His Spirit ... and invited to join Him in ministry by bearing Him into this world. It's just that, like Jesus, Who said that "the Son can do nothing by Himself" (Jn 5:19), we too must choose to trust the Father's gracious, unconditional love. We never arrive in our own strength.

We are only free when we die to trying to justify ourselves through good behaviour and pious performance. Jesus came to raise the dead, not improve the improvable.

To the degree that we see ourselves as the Pharisee does, we will resist and even resent GRACE. Only when we admit that we are helpless like the Tax Collector can we receive the GRACE Jesus is offering us.

It's tempting to try to excel at being a good Christian. Instead, we can accept that, as disciples of Jesus, we will always be strugglers ... always feel like beginners ... always remain grateful for the unconditional acceptance God is offering us. (Adapted from Robert Farrar Capon)



Do I quietly put my trust in my good behaviour?

Do I think God should bless me because I make sacrifices ... because I serve in ministry?

Do I look down on others for not being as committed, obedient, diligent, biblical, etc. as I am?

Do I see myself as bringing Christ into dark places? ... or open to discovering You at work everywhere?

Here's my heart formation prayer each morning. ***What might yours be?***

Lord, You are God and I am not.

But broken as I am, I am Your beloved son.

And as Your child, I am connected to You, even one with You in Christ.

On my own, I can do nothing, I know nothing ... but with You, I can face anything that comes today.

Help me to bear You into this world and pour myself out for others as Jesus would.